

Pima County/Tucson Women's Commission
Executive Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 3, 2010 at 5:30 pm
240 North Court Ave, Tucson, AZ 85701

Adopted Minutes

Present: Anna Harper, Carol Dow, Marian Amoroso-Benedetto, Michael Mandel

Absent: None

Staff: Jessie Baxter, Executive Director

- 1) Call to order/roll call – Meeting called to order by Mandel at 5:35pm. Roll called by Baxter documented above. Quorum was established.
- 2) Audit presentation – Marian DeVries presented audit findings from the previous fiscal year. She gave a clean opinion.
- 3) Review and approve minutes from past Executive Committee meeting 02/03/2010 – Dow noted correction regarding her comment about her future with the Commission. Amoroso-Benedetto made motion to approve minutes with amendments, second by Dow; passed unanimously.
- 4) Review and approve February 2010 financials – Motion to accept February financials by Amoroso-Benedetto; second by Harper; passed unanimously.
- 5) Further discussion regarding how to responsibly and respectfully plan for the Commission's future – Two additional suggestions were added to lists including: increasing the number of commissioners to achieve quorum and increasing communication to former commissioners and other stakeholders. Mandel opened floor for discussion between committee members, staff, and public.

Dow liked the idea of the endowment because it would be a good way to ensure we can do future good for the community.

Clarihew noted that due to complications with the building it might be difficult to find a foundation willing to take our building. Also noting this concern would extend to selling the building.

Tobias commented that all the complications with the building have a financial solution.

White raised the question of if the Commission should consider forming its own foundation.

Mandel suggested there might be a potential problem with forming a foundation because there is already the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona.

Tobias said it could be possible to sell the building with stipulations in order to keep space.

Harper said what she was hearing around the room was a desire for the Commission to continue because there was a lot of work to be done on the behalf of women and suggested that the non-profit 501c3 status may be hampering the Commission's ability to advocate for women.

White said historically the 501c3 status had helped the Commission secure grants for the building and programs.

Harper thought it might be more difficult to get grants in the current economy.

Dow raised questions regarding the Commission's identity and unique niche saying it's historically been a debate between policy & advocacy vs. programs & services

White suggested the Commission try to engage in more joint grant writing noting the 501c3 status would make that possible.

Dow said grant writing takes a lot of staff time noting all the work has fallen on the shoulders of one staff member.

White said she currently does everything that was mentioned with only two title V workers to answer phones and a few staff members to provide service.

Harper raised the question if the Commission should be providing services.

Tobias suggested we research other Commissions with the idea of looking at advocacy/policy vs. programs/service.

Mandel described Monica Mueller's experience at the NACW conference noting we have a very unique structure compared to our counterparts around the country.

White stated the non-profit status saved the Commission in the past.

Harper noted that when the Commission started in 1976 the need was different.

Tobias agreed at the time the Commission was started there were not as many services providers in the community as there are currently.

White said not much has changed in terms of needs of women regarding pay equity, reproductive rights, etc.

Mandel suggested all of the things mentioned should be addressed though advocacy at the policy level.

Tobias shared personal example of a group changing their focus and alienating current members.

White said she didn't think it was wise to could de-couple policy and service giving the example of the Commission and the fire department saying it was an example of both service and advocacy.

Mandel said he saw the fire department as an example of advocacy.

Tobias suggested we would need input from others who are not currently at the table.

Harper gave example of a hungry person and the options of giving him an emergency food box versus advocating policy changes to the current system.

White said direct service providers get the majority of the funding.

Tobias raised questions regarding how the Commission should function in the future.

Clarihew raised question about who would do the work without any funding.

Mandel suggested the Commission would have to change into a working volunteer board noting that several current and past commissioners have previously made this suggestions.

Clarihew asked how this would work given the fact the Commission has not even been able to achieve quorum.

Harper raised question why the Commission should continue to do the same things it always has if it hasn't worked in the past.

Dow said this was an opportunity to update our thinking on where we stand in the community currently.

Harper said she didn't think the Commission needed money as much as it needed will and hard work.

Clarihew wanted to know how the work would get done without staff if the Commission were to change into just a volunteer board.

Baxter suggested it would be similar to how the other City and County Commissions operate with the help of the City and County Clerks.

Clarihew pointed out that it is not a small job and noted that Monica Mueller and Sandy Davenport both left the Commission because of the stress of the job.

Epperson agreed there is a lot of work to be left for just volunteers.

Mandel said the scope of the work would change and there would be less work in terms of financials, building, operations, etc.

Harper wanted to know how the work of the Commission could best fulfill its mission.

White said the Commission wouldn't be able to impact federal policy or decisions made by the Supreme Court.

Amoroso-Benedetto wanted to know if we would still be doing financial reporting if we continue to take city or county money.

Epperson raised question if the commission has not fulfilled mission in the past.

Dow said we needed to look at the past and present as connected saying we are all on the side of the Commission and that we just have different ways of serving the mission.

Baxter said she felt the Commission had fulfilled its mission in the past but that has become one small aspect of what the staff does noting how much time is spent on building, leases, tenants, repairs, audits, etc.

Mandel suggested we look at the big picture and raised question if there were any other groups who are looking at the totality of the state of women in the community. Mandel also reviewed the strategy screen and identity statement created in January 2009.

Tobias suggested we seek input from local elected officials, stakeholders, religious leaders, business leaders, and many others.

Baxter said she had talked to several of the offices of local elected officials and has heard many positive comments about the transparency of the community stakeholder meetings but not any firm suggestions on how the Commission should move forward.

Harper said that if the local elected officials wanted to close us down this would be their opportunity.

White said we need at least one paid staff person to be effective noting how difficult it can be to coordinate volunteers.

Mandel said he disagreed and he thought the Commission could be effective without a paid staff person.

Dow suggested maybe a part time person as a compromise.

Harper asked what the next steps should be.

Tobias said she was willing to volunteer to call Commissioners to make sure they were planning on attending the next full commission meeting.

Harper wanted to know how we would bring new members up to speed quickly so we all have the same information to make a decision.

White suggested we need to hold at least a few more community stakeholder meetings.

Clarihew suggested we get the elected officials to attend these community meetings.

Mandel suggested we take our message to them and maybe even get on the City and County agendas to give a brief presentation.

Clarihew suggested doing so during a City Council study session.

Baxter suggested we have the Commissioners communicate directly with the elected official who appointed them.

Harper suggested everyone have talking points to discuss with their appointer.

Clarihew suggested we use the example Kaitlin Meadows created a while ago.

- 6) Committee and Staff Reports - Amoroso-Benedetto motioned to table Committee and Staff Reports due to time, second by Harper; passed unanimously.
 - a) Advocacy Committee
 - b) Development Committee
 - c) Young Women's Leadership Committee
 - d) Executive Director
- 7) Call to the public – No additional comments.
- 8) Adjourn - Amoroso-Benedetto made motion to adjourn at 7:46pm, second by Harper; passed unanimously.